

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.739
17 June 1996

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-NINTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 17 June 1996, at 3.30 p.m.

President:

Mr. Akram

(Pakistan)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 739th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Following further intensive consultations last Friday, and this morning, on the issue of expansion of membership of the Conference, I understand that the Conference is now prepared to take action on the draft decision contained in document CD/1403 according to the procedure agreed upon at the informal plenary meeting we have just held. May I take it that the Conference adopts the decision contained in document CD/1403, with immediate effect?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I should like, on behalf of all of us, to welcome the 23 new members of the Conference on Disarmament, namely: Austria, Bangladesh, Belarus, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Finland, Iraq, Israel, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Senegal, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, Ukraine, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

I am informed that I shall be receiving a letter from the 23 new members setting out the manner in which they will cooperate with, and make a contribution to, the Conference on Disarmament.

Allow me to express my deep appreciation for the spirit of compromise and accommodation displayed by all, which has made this decision possible. The fact that the Conference was able to rise to the challenge before it and finally solve this long-outstanding issue, just as we are entering the final phase of the CTBT negotiations, augurs well for the future of the Conference. The decision we have just taken will, indeed, make this forum more representative. I am sure we all look forward to the contribution of the new members to our endeavours.

I should like to take this opportunity to express appreciation to Ambassador O'Sullivan of Australia, who held the consultations on this issue, and to all my predecessors, including Ambassador Mounir Zahran of Egypt and Ambassador Benjelloun-Touimi of Morocco, who have contributed greatly to the successful conclusion of this effort. We owe all of them deep gratitude for their untiring efforts to make this decision possible.

I shall now suspend this plenary meeting for 15 minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 3.35 p.m. and resumed at 3.50 p.m.

The PRESIDENT: The 739th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is resumed.

I should like to inform the Conference that I have received the letter referred to earlier from the 23 new members of the Conference on Disarmament

(The President)

setting out the manner in which they will cooperate with, and make a contribution to, the Conference. This letter will be circulated as an official document of the Conference.

I would like now to give the floor to the distinguished representative of Cuba, Ambassador Caballero, who will speak on behalf of the Group of 21.

Mr. CABALLERO (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): In my capacity as coordinator of the Group of 21, I wish to make the following statement.

The Group of 21 wishes to express its satisfaction at the decision just taken by the Conference on Disarmament with regard with regard to the expansion of its membership, and to give a warm welcome in our midst to the new members. We are sure that their contribution to our work will be significant. We wish to take this opportunity to recall that our Group was always in favour of the admission of the States identified in the O'Sullivan list. The Group of 21 hopes to establish close cooperation with the new member States.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Cuba for his statement on behalf of the Group of 21. I now call on the representative of Romania, Ambassador Neagu, who will speak on behalf of the Eastern European Group.

Mr. NEAGU (Romania): Mr. President, since it is the first time that I take the floor under your presidency, let me congratulate you on the exemplary manner in which you are discharging the difficult task entrusted to the President of the CD, in particular at a time when important developments take place or are about to happen. Hence, your much appreciated diplomatic skills and talent are today generously rewarded through the decision on expansion of the Conference to include 23 new members.

On behalf of the Eastern European Group, I am very pleased to welcome this historic step intended to bring the composition of the CD, the unique multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, in line with the realities of the post-cold-war era in terms both of representativity and efficiency. It is a long-awaited decision which we, as a group, as well as individual countries, have supported from the very beginning. The Eastern European Group has always expressed a positive, constructive approach as far as the question of CD expansion is concerned, and our sincere desire to speed up the process. We are happy that the spirit of compromise and flexibility has once again prevailed and the Conference achieved a very satisfactory result. Let me wholeheartedly welcome the new colleagues who have joined us in the Conference and express to them, on behalf of the members of my Group, a sincere desire to strengthen our cooperation to the benefit and accomplishment of the challenging tasks of arms control and disarmament lying ahead of us all.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Romania for his statement on behalf of the Eastern European Group, as well as for his kind words addressed to me. I now call on Ambassador Sha of China.

Mr. SHA (China) (translated from Chinese): As the coordinator of the Group of 1, I would like to make the following statement.

Today's plenary is a very happy plenary. It is also a plenary of historic significance because today 23 countries after an arduous long march have finally arrived at their destination in becoming members of the CD. The Chinese delegation would like to extend to them our warmest congratulations.

The Chinese delegation has always believed that all countries have the right to participate fully in the work of the CD on an equal basis. An appropriate expansion of the membership of the CD is an outcome of developing circumstances and a contribution to the improvement of the representativeness of the CD. China has always understood, respected and supported the request of the 23 countries. It has always held that the issue of expansion of the CD must be solved immediately without any condition. For reasons known to all, this issue has not been solved until today. It is the view of my delegation that an early solution is better than a later solution and a later solution is better than none. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to indicate that my country, as an independent Group of 1 country, is ready to cooperate closely with the newly admitted members of the CD and make our joint contribution to the development of the international disarmament and arms control cause.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of China for his statement. I would now like to give the floor to the distinguished representative of Egypt, Ambassador Zahran.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): A short while ago and following a delay of nearly three years, the Conference on Disarmament adopted the decision to expand its membership. We wish firstly to endorse the statement made by the Ambassador of Cuba on behalf of the G.21 and to stress that Egypt has always been supportive of the expansion package proposed by Ambassador O'Sullivan of Australia in 1993. We have made it clear that we are in favour of expanding the membership of the Conference. Having agreed to expand the Conference on Disarmament by 23 new members, we must bear in mind that other States are also candidates for membership. Egypt would have preferred the decision to cover all the countries which have applied for membership of the Conference on Disarmament.

Nearly three years ago, when we thought that the Conference was about to approve Ambassador O'Sullivan's recommendations to expand the membership of the Conference over which I had the pleasure of presiding, Egypt was going to make a national statement concerning regional security in the Middle East. Regrettably, the conditions which prompted Egypt to prepare such a statement at that time still prevail, and I would therefore like to make a few observations in this regard.

Egypt is hopeful that Israel, now a member of the Conference on Disarmament, will cooperate with all the countries of the Middle East, including Egypt, to achieve progress on the vitally important issue of arms

(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

control in the region, which must be addressed comprehensively particularly in region as volatile as the Middle East, where the massive military imbalances which currently exist between the military capabilities of the States of the region are incompatible with the requirements of a genuine, equitable, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. To rectify this situation, several objectives must be achieved. The first is Israel's adherence to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the placing of all its nuclear facilities under full-scope IAEA safeguards. Such a step would constitute a significant confidence-building measure that would increase mutual trust among all parties in the Middle East. The presence of a de facto nuclear-weapon State in the Middle East, with all the threats and dangers that such a situation entails, cannot be reconciled with the requirements of genuine and comprehensive peace, and it is for this reason that the adherence of Israel to the NPT represents a dire necessity.

Another priority objective which Egypt has been striving to achieve for more than 20 years is the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. This objective could also be achieved in a wider context in accordance with President Mubarak's initiative of 1990, whereby a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction would be established in this region. So far neither of these two initiatives has been implemented due to Israel's insistence on not forgoing the nuclear option. We hope that the recent signing in Cairo on 11 April 1996 of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone Treaty will have positive repercussions on the Middle East, as it reaffirms Egypt's commitment to the objective of nuclear disarmament worldwide, to which Egypt attaches the highest priority and which it hopes will be an issue to be negotiated in an ad hoc committee to be established in the Conference on Disarmament once it concludes the CTBT negotiations. We find it regrettable that the arms control and regional security working group, the ACRS, which was established at the peace conference on the Middle East, has so far not achieved any significant breakthrough despite the diligent attempts made by Egypt to stimulate the pace within the said working group so that it could begin to deal with substantive issues of vital importance. The Israeli refusal to discuss the nuclear question in this context is giving rise to legitimate doubts and fears which cannot be beneficial to the peace process as a whole. For this reason Egypt urges Israel to take a constructive approach to the activities of the arms control and regional security working group, the ACRS, particularly following Israel's admission to the Conference on Disarmament, which should have a positive impact on the Middle East, where mutual confidence and transparency are the only way to ensure that there will be no further outbreaks of violence causing more suffering for all the peoples in the region, as part of our efforts to achieve a comprehensive and just settlement in the Middle East in order to ensure the security of all the States of the region, which necessitates the elimination of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction from the Middle East.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Egypt for his statement, and now I would like to call on the distinguished representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. BAIDI-NEJAD (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, since this is the first time that my delegation takes the floor under your presidency, I would like to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. May I also express the gratitude and full satisfaction of my delegation on the way you have guided the Conference at this juncture?

We have long been advocating the expansion of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament as a matter of principle. It is our firm conviction that an expanded Conference on Disarmament, and hence a more representative Conference, can play a more effective role in the area of international security and disarmament. Moreover, the expansion of membership is essential for the credibility of the Conference, particularly as so many of the candidates for membership have continuously contributed to enrich the negotiations in the Conference.

My delegation, however, has expressed a reservation regarding the membership of one of the candidates in the list, namely Israel. We still believe that the admission of a candidate whose policies have served only to threaten regional and international peace, security and stability would be unwise and not helpful. The policy of Israel in pursuing an active nuclear weapons programme, and thus refusing to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty and to place its nuclear installations under IAEA safeguards, is a major and immediate concern for my country and all countries in the region. Israel is the sole obstacle to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone and a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. These concerns have been fully shared by the international community in many instances through numerous resolutions in the United Nations General Assembly, and most recently by the unanimous resolution of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

Conscious, however, of the fragility of the formula presented for the expansion of the Conference, and recognizing the dedication of many of the incoming members to the work of the Conference on Disarmament, we have decided not to stand in the way of this decision just adopted. This, as many of you are aware, has not been an easy decision, and the matter has had to be seriously contemplated in the light of the strong desire of so many on the list of 23 to see this decision carried. We are confident that these countries will contribute greatly to the negotiations in the CD, and we therefore extend to them a very warm welcome.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Iran for his statement and for the kind words addressed to me. I would now like to give the floor to the distinguished representative of Finland, Ambassador Ekblom.

Mr. EKBLOM (Finland): Mr. President, may I start by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament? I have long-standing personal experience of your excellent qualifications for guiding this Conference through its crucial important month of June 1996, and you can count on the full support of my delegation.

(Mr. Ekblom, Finland)

This is a historic day for the Conference on Disarmament. The new composition now better reflects the present-day international situation. Thanks go to all members of the Conference. In particular, I would like to pay tribute to you, Mr. President, to Ambassador Sánchez Arnau of Argentina, to Ambassador Berguño of Chile, and to Ambassador Selebi of South Africa, who once again took the lead in pushing the solution forward. You all had a vital role in achieving the success.

This may not have been a perfect solution. Yet it was achievable. The solution provided the means to overcome the obstacle that related to one applicant country, a problem that prevented agreement on the expansion for three long years. The solution reached should be seen solely in connection with this unique situation within the Conference.

Finland will assume membership of the Conference with a sense of obligation. The task at hand is to promote security and stability for all in today's world. It is work in which we have an interest and a duty to be involved. Finland hopes that the agreement on expansion will add new life - new dynamism - to the Conference on Disarmament.

The Conference on Disarmament remains the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament and non-proliferation issues. This is a tall order. To deliver, and despite accomplishments past and present, the Conference must also learn the art of renewal. Our agenda should cover a whole range of issues, nuclear and non-nuclear alike. The work should concentrate on focused issues where progress can be achieved.

In 1992, the Conference concluded a Chemical Weapons Convention. By the end of June, the negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty (CTBT) are to be completed. We support this goal and the efforts of Ambassador Ramaker, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, in guiding the negotiations to a successful conclusion. After the CTBT, Finland wants the Conference to concentrate on the cut-off, a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Regarding conventional arms control, transparency measures as well as anti-personnel land-mines are areas which need to be addressed by the Conference. Finland is ready to work on these questions as well.

For those who applied for membership of the Conference more than 10 years ago, this was a painstakingly long process. Too long. Let me reiterate our view that all the countries that wish to participate in the work of the Conference should be accepted as members of the Conference. Finland therefore proposes that the Conference should nominate a special coordinator to address the remaining applications still in the course of this year.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Finland, Ambassador Ekblom, for his statement and for the kind words that he has addressed to me. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Israel, Ambassador Lamdar.

Mr. LAMDAN (Israel): Mr. President, since this is the first time that I am taking the floor as a new and fully-fledged member of the CD, I should like to express our compliments to you on the way that you have conducted the proceedings thus far. I should also like to congratulate all those who have had a hand in achieving the decision just passed expanding the CD.

It had not been my intention to take the floor this afternoon, but I feel constrained, regrettably, to do so in the light of extraneous political elements which have just been introduced into our deliberations by certain delegations. However, I do not wish to detract from the generally celebratory nature of our proceedings this afternoon and, hence, for the time being, I will refrain from addressing those statements in substance. I would simply wish to reserve my obvious right to respond to those statements in full at an early date and when we deem necessary. For the rest, let me say that we are encouraged by the decision taken by the CD, and would like to assure all members that we, Israel, will do our utmost to contribute to the efficacious working of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Israel for his statement and for the kind words to me, and would now like to give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Republic of Korea, Ambassador Sun.

Mr. SUN (Republic of Korea): I would like to join the previous speaker in expressing my sincere appreciation to you, Mr. President, for the most valuable good offices you have provided in bringing about a consensus on the issue of the CD membership expansion. My particular thanks go to the distinguished Ambassador of Chile, Dr. Berguño, and the distinguished Ambassador Selebi of the South African Republic, for their crucial roles in this regard. I also extend my sincere appreciation to all the States parties of the CD for the spirit of compromise and cooperation that they have demonstrated at the eleventh hour of the consultations.

My Government is of the view that the CD has been significantly contributing to the promotion and maintenance of international security and peace. With the expansion of its membership as of today, I hope that the CD will increase its role and contribution to the cause of international peace. As a full member of the CD and commensurate with its economic and other capabilities, the Republic of Korea will spare no efforts in cooperating with other members of the CD in carrying out its important tasks, including the successful and timely conclusion of the CTBT.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Republic of Korea for his statement and for his kind words to me. I would now like to call on the distinguished representative of Argentina, who will also speak on behalf of the Western Group.

Mr. SANCHEZ ARNAU (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): I think that today we are adopting a decision which, as some speakers have already described it, is truly historic. Especially if we bear in mind that this Conference has not been expanded in terms of the number of its members since 1978, and if we bear in mind that it took us more than three years to be able to finally implement a decision of principle that had already been adopted in August 1993. As the expansion of the Conference materializes today, I think we must pay tribute to the efforts that have been made by all those who laid the foundations which made today's decision possible. First of all, Ambassador Paul O'Sullivan of Australia, who, as Special Coordinator for the expansion of the membership, and after several months of painstaking consultations, submitted on 12 August 1993 the proposal designed to increase the number of members of the Conference as part of a dynamic process for its expansion. Also various distinguished members of this Conference who continued that work, and here we must single out the Ambassador of Egypt, Mounir Zahran, the then Ambassador and now Foreign Minister of Brazil, Luiz Felipe Lampreia, the Ambassador of Morocco, Benjelloun-Touimi, whose work made it possible to adopt decision CD/1356 which we are putting into effect today. As well as the initiatives that were taken by the Ambassador of the Russian Federation, Berdennikov and Ambassador Tarmidzi of Indonesia. We must also, on this occasion, thank you, Sir, for the way in which you have conducted this entire process, Secretary-General Petrovsky for the cooperation he has lent us, and without any doubt the coordinators of the other regional groups who also helped to ensure that we could reach a happy conclusion to this process of adopting the decision that you have just submitted for our consideration. And finally, just to extend a welcome to those who, for too long, have been waiting to become members of this Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Argentina for his statement. This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Thursday, 20 June 1996 at 10 a.m. in conference room V.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.